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RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

WORKS ON THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

In this young science the student is no longer obliged to complain of the dearth of material. He is more likely to suffer from the embarrassment of riches, and may be reminded of the old danger of not seeing the wood for the trees. Evidence may be found in the group of books now on the reviewer's table, they being only a fragment of what has recently come from the press. Some of these frankly profess to give us observed phenomena only; others aspire to show the laws of development according to which religious experience has gradually disengaged itself from the heterogeneous matter with which in the earlier stages of civilization it is inextricably mixed.

Material for the religion of uncivilized peoples is given us in the pamphlet of Dr. Meinhof.¹ This opens a new series of the *Religions-geschichtliches Lesebuch*. The original work published under that name included selections from the various sacred books of the world. The present series assumes that religious material may be found in the folklore of peoples which have not yet a written literature. The specimens before us do in fact throw light upon the thinking of the savage. There is a rude attempt at a cosmogony, telling how God or a god created man and woman, and gave them speckled cows. The gift was withdrawn when men began to kill the animals. The only religious element in the story is the intimation that the cows are sacred and to kill them is a crime. The tales, like fairy stories elsewhere, are concerned with dragons and dragon-slayers, with men who are transformed into beasts, with witchcraft, magic, and ordeals. Parallel to European usage is the application of torture to persons accused of witchcraft in order to extort a confession. The line between magic and religion is faintly marked as among other peoples at this stage of culture. There is evidence, however, of worship of ancestors, of the worship of serpents, and of totemism. Rites which may be called religious are performed at the completion of a new house, at the beginning of harvest, and at the circumcision of the young men, although in all these cases the intention is to drive away the

¹ *Religionen der schriftlosen Völker Afrikas*. Von Carl Meinhof. Tübingen: Mohr, 1913. 46 pages. M. 1.20.

demons quite as much as to propitiate the divinities. There is a prayer recited at the time of sacrifice, however, in which the divinity is addressed as the "man in heaven." The phenomena are similar to what we find in other regions, and cannot be called new. But it is convenient to have them attested from native sources and in this form.

Savage beliefs concerning the state of the dead are treated at great length by Dr. Frazer in his Gifford Lectures.¹ The author's method is well known from his other works. We find here the same wealth of material and also the same insistence upon his own agnosticism. After an introductory lecture on method, in which he defines this department of science as the embryology of religion, he takes up the savage view of death, showing that among many peoples death is not regarded as a necessary phenomenon of earthly existence, but is always attributed to some external agency, either a malignant spirit or a human sorcerer. In the regions treated in this volume there seems also to prevail the belief that the soul does not perish at the death of the body but survives it, at least for a considerable time. The attempt to conciliate the ghosts is the logical result, and this, as is shown, leads in many cases to religion in the form of ancestor worship. It is impossible in a mere book notice to give an idea of the abundant material here presented to view. Lagarde used to say that he was simply the carter who brought building materials for those who should erect the building. Dr. Frazer is certainly one of the most industrious of our carters.

Among the attempts to popularize the results of the study of religion the *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher* deserve a prominent place. One of these is before us in Professor Stübe's *Confucius*.² In limited compass but with admirable clearness the author sums up for us what is known of the great teacher. We look upon the picture of a typical Chinese with his conservatism, his practical sense, his love of tradition, and his evaluation of the social order: "A man of moral power and independent will combined with a clear judgment and an acute though well-balanced understanding." How far he may be classed with the great religious leaders and whether he should not be ranked as a "mere moralist" is still under debate. The truth seems to be that in religion as in other

¹ *The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead*. By J. G. Frazer. Vol. I. "The Belief among the Aborigines of Australia, the Torres Straits Islands, New Guinea and Melanesia." The Gifford Lectures, St. Andrews, 1911-12. London and New York: Macmillan, 1913. \$3.00.

² *Confucius*. Von Dr. R. Stübe. (*Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher*, III. Reihe, 15. Heft.) Tübingen: Mohr, 1913, 40 pages. M. 1.50.

things he accepted the great tradition of his people. Speculation was far from his thoughts. To this very fact he owes his influence among the Chinese, an influence which recent revolutions do not seem to have diminished.

The book of Professor Moulton is not quite what the title leads one to expect.¹ It is not a discussion of the relation of the historic religions to the idea of religion or to the universal religion. Nor is it what its second title claims, that is, a study of the science of religion pure and applied, unless we understand by the words the study of the bearing of the science of religion on the work of Christian missions. What an attentive reading of the book suggests is that the author fears lest the study of religion may in some way hinder the missionary in his work, perhaps by cooling the zeal of his supporters at home. He expresses the hope that his lectures "may have disarmed some of the very natural prejudice which may exist among Christian people when confronted with theories of the origin of religion appearing to them to leave out the supernatural." No doubt there is room for a careful study of the effect of the comparative study of religion on missionary methods, and in what this author says many things may help to clear up the confusion of thought on this subject. It is unfortunate, however, that at the very outset of the book we find inaccuracies which make the reader think that the writer has not given sufficient attention to his facts. For example, he confuses two separate works when he states that W. B. Smith has republished his *Vorchristliche Jesus* under the title *Ecce Deus*. On the next page Professor Drews is located at Jena instead of Karlsruhe. These are slips which one may call trifling, but it is by such that a man is apt to be judged. More serious is the question whether the author is sympathetic in his interpretation of ancient thought. He says, for example, that the disciples of John the Baptist after confessing their sins were plunged into the waters of the Jordan, far away from any holy place made with hands, "to assure them that even as they had washed away the uncleanness of the body so would God cleanse the guilt of the penitent soul." Where does Professor Moulton get this light on the mind of John the Baptist? Is it not much more in accord with ancient Jewish thought to suppose that the great preacher attributed efficacy to the *opus operatum*? Or, again, when the institution of the Supper by Jesus is called "an acted parable" is not the realism of ancient conceptions ignored? Certainly the author of the Fourth Gospel had much

¹ *Religions and Religion: A Study of the Science of Religion Pure and Applied.* By James Hope Moulton. New York: Methodist Book Concern. 212 pages. \$1.25.

more than an acted parable in mind when he spoke of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man. In making these criticisms I do not wish to underrate the religious warmth which finds expression in these lectures, and which will doubtless favorably impress many readers.

Of larger scope than any of the books yet noticed is the work of the late Professor von Orelli, the second edition of a book which is already known to workers in this field.¹ The author's theological position is also well known, but has not disagreeably influenced his presentation. Occasionally we seem to detect a survival from the time when it was supposed that traces of a primitive revelation, monotheistic in character, could be found among almost all nations. Traditional ideas show themselves in the mention of the remarkable oracle of Noah, father of the nations, according to which the Indo-European nations (Japhet) should spread abroad in the earth, whilst the Semites (Shem) should possess their revealed God as their most precious inheritance.

Since no man can be a specialist in all departments the writer of a book of this kind must depend largely upon the labors of others, and this author seems to have made diligent and judicious use of the literature at his command. Where he ventures on comparative study on his own account he is not always happy, as where he affirms that the God of heaven held among the primitive Aryans the same dominant place which the God of heaven possessed among Semites, and also among the Chinese. Unfortunate is the attempt to bring the sacredness of the cow among the Hindoos into comparison with the red heifer of the Levitical system. The most serious question raised by the book concerns the order of arrangement. This is, to be sure, one of the most difficult problems with which our science has to deal. Can we find a logical order in which to treat the religions of the world, so as to discover a progress from higher to lower? Professor von Orelli evidently thinks not. He is prejudiced against all evolutionary theories, and does not believe that the phenomena which we observe among uncivilized races represent primitive religion. His own arrangement of the various religions therefore makes no attempt at a progressive order, but follows what he supposes to be the accepted ethnological scheme, taking up first the Turanians, then the Hamites, followed by the Semites (including Israel, Christianity, which, however, is passed over with a mere mention, and Islam). Then comes

¹ *Allgemeine Religionsgeschichte*. Von Conrad von Orelli. Zweite Auflage in zwei Bänden. Bonn: Marcus und Weber, 1913. Published in parts, 2 Marks each. Vol. II, viii+478 pages.

the Indo-Germanic family, followed by Africans, American Indians, and the inhabitants of Australia and the islands of the Pacific. That this order is neither logical nor historic must be evident. The religion of the uncivilized Mongols and Tartars is interjected between those of the Chinese and Japanese. And by leaving the religions of Africa and Australia to the last the author debars himself from understanding many survivals of earlier ideas and rites which are found even in the higher forms of religion. In such a religion as that of the Greeks, for example, much light might have been had from such a book as Miss Harrison's *Prolegomena*, to which we find no reference whatever.

The high expectations with which we approach any work of Professor Moore are fully met by the one before us.¹ The purpose is clearly stated at the beginning: "In the presentation of the several religions, to show their relation to race and physical environment and to national life and civilization, to trace their history and to discover the causes of progress and decline and the influences which have affected them from without." I know of no work which so thoroughly accomplishes these objects as this one. It combines abundant learning with philosophic breadth of view and both with sympathetic insight.

By grouping these nine religions in one volume and reserving Judaism, Christianity, and Islam for separate treatment the author probably intends us to accept the fundamental classification of religions under the three heads of polydemonism, polytheism, and monotheism. He leaves at one side the religions of uncivilized peoples, since they require a different method. Whether the polytheistic religions he portrays form a graded sequence from lower to higher he does not tell us. But it is not without significance that certain survivals from prehistoric faith and ritual are more in evidence in China than elsewhere, and on any evolutionary theory it is appropriate to begin with this religion. And on the same theory the culmination may appropriately be reached with the Roman religion. At the same time we are not allowed to forget that striking resemblances are found in those regions most remote from each other. Thus in regard to the functions of the gods, "the religion of China strikingly resembles that of Rome; for a practical people it is enough to know what the gods do and what their worshippers have to do to secure their favor, without trying to imagine what they are like." A similar parallel is pointed out in connection with the claim of the

¹ *History of Religions*. By George Foot Moore. Vol. I, China, Japan, Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, India, Persia, Greece, Rome. ("The International Theological Library.") New York: Scribner, 1913. xiv+637 pages. \$2.50.

Japanese emperor to be manifest deity, where we are reminded that Antiochus IV assumed the title of Epiphanes to express the same claim. The semiannual days of purification in Japan are parallel to Ezekiel's semiannual days of atonement. In the ritualistic development of Buddhism "a supernatural virtue is attributed to the performance of the ritual as in all high churches." These resemblances, which are in no case the result of borrowing, testify to the unity of religious thinking among the most diverse peoples. Did space allow I might quote numerous sentences which by calling attention to such parallels throw a vivid light upon this unity of man's religious experience. For these the reader must go to the book itself. And also for what is perhaps of even greater value, that is, the sympathetic treatment of the great religious leaders, Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Plato, to mention only the most conspicuous.

HENRY PRESERVED SMITH

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THE EXCAVATION OF BABYLON

Few cities have stirred the imagination of men as has Babylon. For almost two thousand years this city was either the political or cultural center of Western Asia. To the Hebrews, Babylon was "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride" (Isa. 13:19). The size of Babylon was proverbial in classical antiquity. When the disgruntled Athenian Peisthetairus (in the comedy) left his country and sought his fortune among the birds, he recommended to them the construction of

a rampart, impregnable strong,
Enormous in thickness, enormously long;
Bigger than Babylon; solid and tall,
With bricks and bitumen, a wonderful wall,
(Aristophanes, *Birds*, 552 f.)

from which, as a center, they would be able to regain their empire and freedom. We are all familiar with Herodotus' interest in, and descriptions of, Babylon and the Babylonians. Upon the forehead of the "scarlet woman" the Christian seer saw written: "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth" (Rev. 17:5).

When the Assyrian army was overthrown, Nineveh fell, to rise no more; even the site of the city was forgotten until modern times. Babylon, on the other hand, fell before invading hosts of Hittites, Assyrians, and Persians, but always rose again from her ruins. At the